

Place of peaceful reflection

DHS students build memorial garden at St. John the Evangelist

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DUXBURY – The new memorial garden behind St. John the Evangelist Episcopal Church is circled by a ring of Belgian block. Paving stones surround it, with stone benches for people to sit.

It is the work of two Duxbury High School graduates, Wes Dorn and Mike Woomer, who built it as their senior project.

The garden is designed so people can scatter the ashes of loved ones on it, Dorn said.

Dorn said he decided upon building the garden as his project because, "I was really looking forward to doing something that made me feel like I really accomplished something."

He, and Woomer, got that something after speaking with the church's youth minister, Heidi Marcotte, who told them that an "unofficial committee" of church women had wanted to build a memorial garden for the past 30 years.

When they presented their proposal to Diane Alongi, Duxbury High school's



COURTESY PHOTO

Parishioners gather for the dedication of the new memorial garden at St. John the Evangelist Episcopal Church.

in-house substitute teacher, who also acts as advisor for students doing a senior project, she got "very excited."

Marcotte acted as the official mentor for the project, Alongi said.

Duxbury High seniors can opt to do a project during their final quarter at school instead of attending regular classes, Alongi explained. The only exception is for AP classes, she added.

"Senior projects are above and beyond," she said. "It's a risk to do this."

Thirty-one students opted to do a project this year, Alongi said.

In the past, Dorn said, he had traveled down to Mississippi with Marcotte on church missions.

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The project, he said, took eight weeks to complete. Officially, students are supposed to take between six and seven weeks to complete the project, but when it became clear that they wouldn't make the deadline, their advisor, Diane Alongi, granted them an extension, Dorn said.

"They went far and above what a senior project is."

— Diane Alongi, DHS teacher

Building the garden was "a lot of work," Dorn said. They cleared the area, laid the stones, put down the topsoil and put in the plants. The one piece of the job they left to a professional was the excavation, which was done by local landscaper Tom Godfrey.

But their project required more than heavy labor, Alongi said. Dorn and Woomey had to meet with members of the congregation to get support for



STAFF PHOTO/MATTHEW NADLER

The memorial garden sits directly behind the church.

their work. They received \$4,000 from the church's memorial fund to pay for it, and they kept parishioners updated via the church newsletter. Besides the garden itself,

the two also wrote up a 10-page proposal, put together a slide show and wrote a final paper. Their documentation was "outstanding," Alongi said.

Alongi and DHS teacher

Cheryl Lewis, who gave the pair their final evaluation, were "blown away," Dorn said.

"They went far and above what a senior project is," Alongi said.